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*Rev. Dr. Landon.
with the best respects of
C. R.*

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE

OF THE

SECOND CHURCH,

ON

THURSDAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1844.

By CHANDLER ROBBINS,

MINISTER OF THE SECOND CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:

I. R. BUTTS, 2 SCHOOL STREET,
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ADDRESS.

WE have assembled, my friends, to perform and to witness a sacred and interesting ceremony, — the laying of the corner-stone of a new edifice for the worship of Almighty God. Like “the fabric of a vision,” the ancient house, which for more than a hundred years occupied this spot, has passed away. Of that beloved and venerable home of our Sabbath affections not one stone is left upon another. We knew not how dear were its old walls, till they began to disappear. We never realized how strong and tender were the associations that bound it to our hearts, till we saw it dismantled, desolate, and ruinous, whilst the work of its destruction was going on.

I believe that few buildings have ever been taken down in this city, whose demolition has excited such general interest, whose loss has been so universally felt. And if such has been the case with others, how much more with us, — with whose spiritual history it has been so long and so intimately interwoven ; who

have occupied its pulpit and its pews; who have offered our children and dedicated ourselves at its altar; whose joys have found a tongue in its thanksgivings; whose sorrows have sought relief in its prayers; whose characters have been spiritualized by its instructions; who have held sweet communion with God and Christ, and the goodly fellowship of the saints, on earth and in heaven, under its hallowed roof.

But all is now how changed! Its last vestige has disappeared, and we are standing together on the very ground it covered, with no roof over our heads but the vaulted skies,—not to lament the walls that have fallen, but to bless and consecrate, with our most sincere wishes and heartfelt prayers, these rising layers of strong and goodly foundation stones and buttresses, that are to bear up the pillars of our new Sabbath home.

I feel, my friends, that the best tribute of respect we can pay to the former house, and the best proof we can give of the value we set upon the sacred lessons we have learned therein, is, to stand together as a Christian people, shoulder to shoulder, and heart to heart; true to each other, true to our common interests and common obligations, as members of the Second Church and Society,—till we shall re-erect on this consecrated spot, a temple worthy of our abilities, and worthy of our love for God and his service; into which we may transfer the sacred vessels of our church, and the best of our old religious sentiments, and come together, at length, one and all, to renew

our ancient brotherly love before its altar, and to worship our God once more, in unison and joy, under its beautiful arches. And, as I look down upon the members of my beloved flock, thus crowded together between these granite walls, I feel that I behold the fairest memorial of the old church, the best foundation of the new. Yes, my brethren, may I not cherish the hope, that the work we are commencing will be established and supported by your combined interest and united zeal, as securely as the iron columns that are to bear up the tower, whose lofty top shall soon herald the dawn, will rest upon the inverted arches that curve beneath your feet.

I have said that we have come together for a *sacred* purpose, and I trust that we are all influenced by those feelings and motives which become the occasion and the work.

How grand and solemn is the thought, that we are building a house for the honor and worship of the King of kings! Let us associate it with the idea of Him, now, from the very laying of its corner-stone. Let a reverential sentiment consecrate it from its foundation to its pinnacle.

How affecting and beautiful is the consideration, that, as children of God, we are building a house for our Father who is in Heaven! Let it be a work of filial love. Let every stone be laid with a feeling of gratitude and affection. Let all our contributions for its erection and ornament be the free-will offerings of our hearts.

We are rearing also a majestic symbol of the

religious sentiment, — a conspicuous monitor of the immortal wants and destiny of man, — a type of the communication between the soul and God. In this point of view, let us feel that we are performing a most valuable work, the extent of whose benefits it is impossible for us to calculate or to conceive. Imagine a city without a temple of religion, — though of such, I believe, history furnishes no example, the very constitution of human nature would not suffer it; — but, imagine a city without a temple, to remind its inhabitants of their relations and duties to the Unseen and Infinite, and you may form some conception of the silent, unappreciated, inappreciable influence which such buildings exert upon the popular mind.

It is with reference to this effect of our church edifices, that I regard their construction with towers, and domes, and particularly with spires, as desirable for far better reasons than merely for ornament and show. Our pious New-England ancestors were influenced by more weighty considerations than, I believe, we are accustomed to suppose, in choosing, as they did, the most commanding elevations in their towns and villages as sites for their houses of worship. They set them up on high, as light-houses, to guide the wayfaring soul through the darkness and perils of earth to the safety and peace of Heaven. They placed them where they might preach continually to the toiling multitudes, whose homes clustered around them, and to the passing traveller on his dusty way. They placed them where they might give a religious character to their towns, and mark them out, even to

the distant observer, as places where God was recognised, where human accountability was felt, where man was taught to love his neighbor, and where strangers might come, without apprehension, to find an asylum of security and rest. And who of us has not felt, a thousand times,—though it may be without analyzing the feeling,—that one of the most delightful and impressive features of New-England scenery is the frequency of its church spires, that are seen rising up above the trees in the country, and towering over the dwellings and warehouses of its cities. They are impressive and beautiful by reason of their *religious* associations and Christian influences. They consecrate the New-England soil. They give to it its character of a land of religious light and godly fear. They stamp holy feelings and heavenly hopes, together with their images, upon the minds of improving and happy generations.

Therefore, my friends, I rejoice that the plan we have adopted contemplates a lofty spire. Let it rise—to the utmost height that the proportions of the edifice will allow. It cannot be seen too far. It will never suggest other than pure and elevating emotions. It shall point upward the aspirations of thousands, as, from the bustle of the busy streets, they see it glittering in the sunbeams by day, and when its top is fading in the starlight, as the noises of earth are still. I would have it seen from the far off hills of the interior, and from the blue waters of the distant bay. I would have it amongst the last landmarks of home upon which the lingering gaze of the departing traveller

may rest, and amongst the first familiar signs to gladden the heart of the returning voyager, as he strains his vision towards his native shore. For such religious and friendly purposes as these, I rejoice in the hope of its rising; and if it can answer them, I am sure you will all of you feel that it will abundantly recompense you for the cost of its construction.

And in this connection, permit me to say a single word in regard to the expense of our new edifice.

I am aware that there are sound objections to an *extravagant* church, — objections of which I feel the force as much as any man. And I hope and trust that it will be found, when ours is completed, that we have not ambitiously exceeded our means. I hope we shall not be liable to the charge of having sacrificed too much to beauty, or of having made the pews so costly, as to prevent good and respectable persons, of moderate means, from becoming proprietors of them. But we ought to be aware that, in so important a matter as the building of a church in such a city as Boston, — a church, which is to stand for centuries, and be suited to the wants and tastes not only of ourselves but our children, — there are many most weighty considerations to be urged in favor of doing the work *thoroughly, substantially and beautifully*. Whilst, on the one hand, we are bound to avoid extravagance, we are equally obligated to avoid parsimony on the other. It would be worthy of reproach, if, whilst our stores and our dwellings are every day improving in convenience and neatness, we should consent to any thing like meanness in the construction

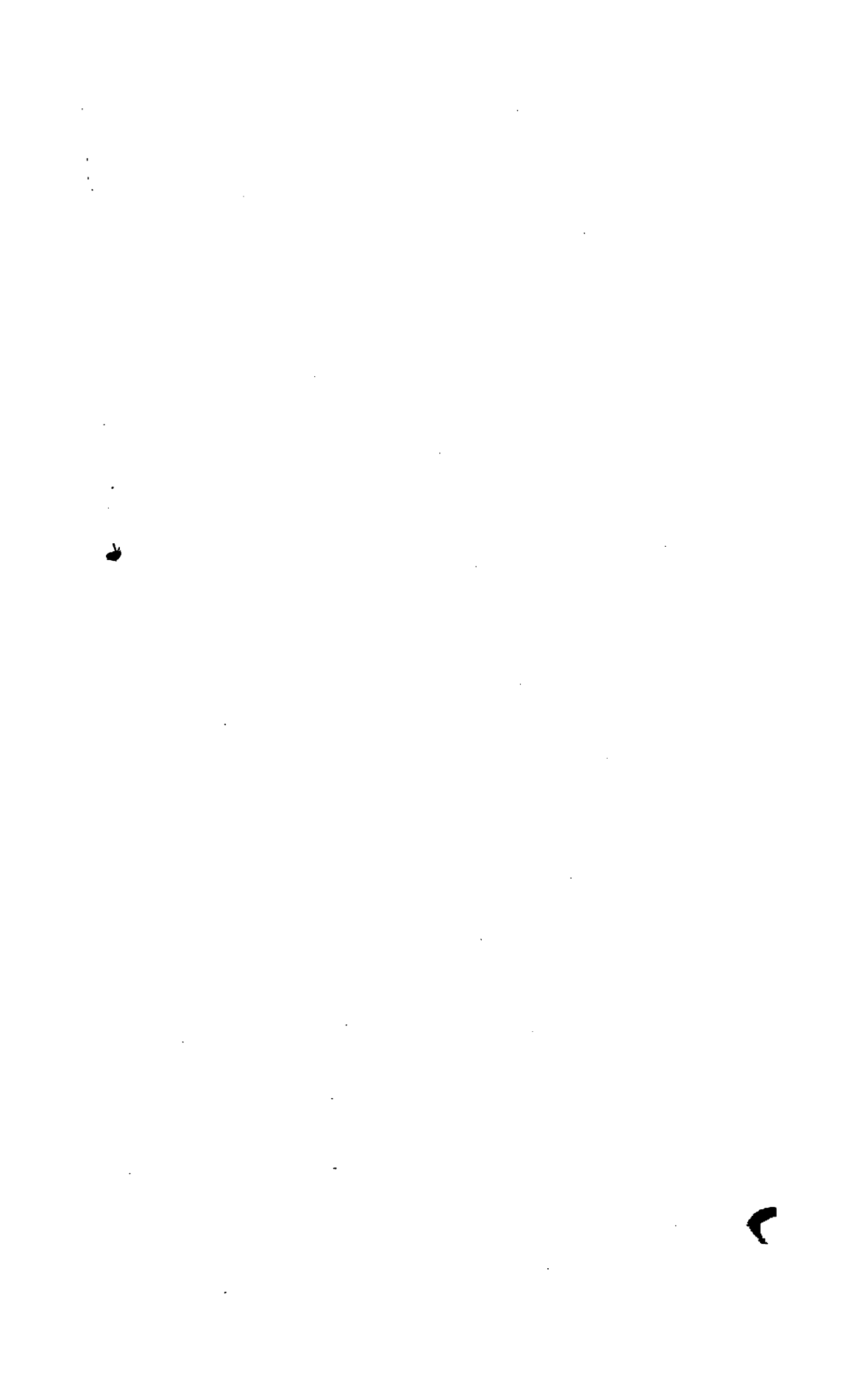
of the House of God. It is natural and honorable to our religious sentiment to desire that our churches should keep pace with the architectural improvements and cultivated taste of the community, or even, if in our power, that they should be a little in advance of them. It is natural for us to take pleasure in adorning, with appropriate decorations, the places and the persons we love. And, if for any thing it would be excusable for us to *strain* our means and our generosity a little, it would be to strengthen and to beautify the temple which we would dedicate to our Father in Heaven — the Sanctuary of our holiest and dearest affections. There are ways enough in which we may restrict our expenditures, without applying too nice and strict calculations of economy to our churches. Let them be the very last objects in regard to which any one shall express, or entertain, that specious benevolence, which of old found fault with the woman of Judea, whose overflowing love for her Saviour prompted the breaking of the alabaster box and the anointing of his feet with the precious ointment — a symbol of that gratitude and reverence which were too great for her costliest treasure to express.

But your position, my hearers, warns me of the impropriety of giving utterance to a multitude of thoughts that crowd upon my mind.

We are building a house of Christian Love. We are founding an asylum of Christian Peace. We are raising a temple of Christian Truth. We are erecting a garrison of Christian Virtue. We are preparing an ark of safety for ourselves and our children.

We lay this corner-stone in Faith and Hope and Charity. We lay it in humble adoration and dependence upon God. We lay it with heartfelt reverence and gratitude to Jesus Christ, — the corner-stone of the Christian's confidence, the rock of our soul's eternal salvation, the Great Head of the church. We lay it with no narrow feelings of sectarian zeal. We lay it in perfect good will to all Christians and to all men. We lay it with thanksgiving and prayer. We lay it with our best wishes for the generations that are to come after us.

For those generations, we deposit, with our blessing, in its granite cavity, this sealed memorial of our church and our days. With deep solemnity we commit it to its strong enclosure. With a feeling of awe we look forward to those distant ages when, long after all of us have been forgotten, this stone shall be lifted up and this leaden box broken. May the house we shall rear upon it be kept safe from elemental rage and the rude assaults of man, till, hoary with age, it shall be taken down with regret by reverential hands. May the light of God's countenance shine steadily and serenely upon it, amidst the revolutions of centuries and the mutations of mortal things. May it be a blessing to every soul that shall enter within its gates, till the last echoes of its prayers are mute, and the last worshipper shall pass out sadly over its threshold.







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